rality has supplied the accompanying figures (Plate X.), representing the adult and immature plumage, was described by Mr. G. R. Gray* from a female specimen obtained by Mr. Wallace in the Aru Islands. In Mr. Wallace's series from Havre Dorey in New Guinea was a single young male example of the same bird, as recorded in Mr. G. R. Gray's list given in the Zoological Society's 'Proceedings' for 1859†. These are the only specimens of this rare *Accipiter* ever yet procured. They have been kindly lent to me by Mr. S. Stevens, for the use of this work, from Mr. Wallace's private collection, in which they are retained. The species being well-marked, and easily recognizable by the figures, which have been drawn by Mr. Wolf, it is not necessary to repeat the descriptions of them, which have already been given by Mr. Gray. It may, however, be worth while to notice, that the adult *female* example (according to Mr. Wallace's determination of the sexes) is slightly smaller than the young male‡.

Mr. Gurney's views as to the correct position of *Accipiter poliocephalus* and its allies have been already noticed in my article on *Accipiter haplochrous* (Ibis, vol. i. p. 276).

XLI.—*On Edible Birds' Nests.* By Edward Blyth, Curator of the Royal Asiatic Society's Museum, Calcutta.

We read, in the London 'Literary Gazette' for January 14, 1860, p. 54, as quite a new discovery, that "M. Payen ascribes the gelatinous properties of the birds' nests so famous in Chinese cookery, and which sell for enormous prices in Paris [qu. Pekin?], to a viscid fluid produced by the salivary glands of the Salangane Swallow [Swift]. The epicure may not thank chemistry for resolving a choice delicacy into the spittle of birds. As this secretion has peculiar properties, M. Payen calls it *cubilose*."

That the famous edible nests of the *Collocaliæ* were "secreted by the very large salivary glands of the bird," I distinctly stated

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* Proc. Zool. Soc. 1858, p. 170.

† Proc. Zool. Soc. 1859, p. 153.

	Long. tota.	alæ.	caudæ.	tarsi.
‡ Spec. 1. (♀ adult. Aru)	14·	8·2	6·	2·3
Spec. 2. (♂ juv. N. G.)	15·5	8·5	6·4	2·35

in 1845 (*vide* Journ. As. Soc. xiv. p. 210); and immediately afterwards I circulated a printed monograph of the Indian *Cypselidæ* among my naturalist friends (which I have not conveniently at hand to refer to just now). In this I gave a chemical analysis of the nests by my friend Mr. J. W. Laidlay, which showed the constituent proximate elements to be those of inspissated saliva. This analysis is referred to in the late Dr. Horsfield's Catalogue of the Birds in the India-House Museum, i. p. 103; only it is not the fact that I confirmed the researches of Sir E. Home, but the reverse. He described a curious structure of the proventricular glands of some different and much larger bird, in mistake for the *Collocalia*, which does not happen to possess the peculiar structure in question*; and my statement was, that the substance of the nests was secreted by the *salivary* glands, and not by the *proventricular* glands as suggested by Home. I further pointed out, that all the Swift-family use more or less of this salivary mucus in the construction of their nests, and that in *Cypselus apus* "it constitutes the basis of the nest, by which is made to adhere the various light substances gathered in the air by these birds, when such are blown about on a windy day." (*Vide loc. cit.*) Moreover, on consideration of this composition of the edible nests, we can readily understand their alleged quality of promoting digestion.

In the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' for January of this year (p. 218), every source but the right one of the substance of these nests is amusingly cited :—"Les célèbres nids d'Hirondelles nous offrent un dernier exemple de cette ingénieuse aptitude qui porte la race chinoise, sous l'influence d'un climat spécial, à varier et à multiplier indéfiniment les substances alimentaires. Ces nids comestibles, dont la nature était jusqu'à ce jour demeurée incertaine, ont été tour-à-tour attribués par un grand nombre de voyageurs et de naturalistes célèbres, soit à une écume de mer tenace, provenant des demeures de la baleine, ramassées par ces hirondelles sur les rochers†, soit à des algues gélatineuses, à des lichens, soit encore à du suc gastrique, à des mélanges de zoophytes, de frai de poisson, ou à des mucus*. Il est constaté aujourd'hui que les nids comestibles d'hirondelles sont formés par une substance muqueuse d'une remarquable abondance, mucus tout spécial secrété au temps des amours de ces petits oiseaux."

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* I have examined the proventricular glands of several specimens, both of *C. nidifica* and of *C. linchi*, shot at the time that their nests were being constructed.—E. B.

† Willughby, 1676, 'Ornith.' "Ex spuma maris basin scopulorum

The *Collocalia nidifica* breeds in the Sikhim Himalaya, which is *rather* too far from the sea to permit of any theory that necessarily connects its nests with any product of the ocean.

Calcutta, March 31, 1860.

XLII.—*Review of* M. O. Des Murs's 'Oologie Ornithologique'†.

That a man with but one idea is a nuisance, is an axiom which only requires time to ripen into a proverb. In spite therefore of the agreeable impression which some of M. Des Murs' previous labours had given us, we confess to having taken up his recent publication in a spirit by no means favourable to what, as we gathered from the title of the work, we expected to find were our author's doctrines. How far a further acquaintance with them has induced us to modify our opinion, we leave our readers to discover from the following remarks.

Few writers have ridden their hobbies more unmercifully than systematizers in Natural History. In Ornithology, indeed, there is hardly any portion of a bird's organization which has not been by some one or another made the basis of classification, and announced to be the real key to the comprehension of the order of creation, and the only means of discovering the much-desired *ultimus finis*—the system of Nature. Beaks and claws, the scutellation of tarsi and the superposition of feathers, the bones of the palate and the bones of the sternal apparatus, the arrangement of the muscles of the trachea and the structure of the alimentary canal, the insertion of the quills and the set-

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alluentis tenacem quandam materiam colligunt, sive ea balænarum seu aliorum piscium sit semen, ex qua suos nidos ædificant."

[*] Voyez les 'Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Sciences,' 1859, p. 521.

[†] Traité général d'Oologie Ornithologique au point de vue de la Classification. Par O. Des Murs. Paris: Klincksieck, 1860.